

7/15/01

The Office & Qualifications Of A Bishop
1Tim. 3:1-2b

One day a man prayed, “Lord when I am wrong, make me willing to change; when I am right, make, me easy to live with. So strengthen me that the power of my example will far exceed the authority of my rank.” #3022

This is the type of leadership He declared to His disciples He was looking for as they desired to be served. Mk. 10:42-44, Jn. 13

Paul told the Corinthians “be imitator of me”, because he was an imitator of Christ and to the Philippians “to do what they saw him do” and they would please God. 1Cor. 4:16, 11:1, Phil 4:9

In chapter one Paul's theme was the proclamation of truth in order to prevent and stop false teaching.

Then in chapter two his theme was prayer and piety, the foundation and preparation for the proclamation of the gospel of truth.

Having forbidden women to teach or exercise authority over a man, Paul now speak to the men who are the heads of the home and the Church.

In chapter three Paul's theme is the qualifications for two church offices of bishops and deacons in order that Timothy might know how to conduct himself in the house of God.

* Women are not to lead the church in Spiritual matters!

* Men are not to lead the church in Spiritual matters without being qualified!

Like people like priest is what Hosea tells the people. Hos. 4:9

Paul gives to Timothy three important turths about the office of a bishop. 1Tim. 3:1-2a-b

- I. The commendation of the office of a bishop. Vs. 1
- II. The function of the office of a bishop. Vs. 1b-c
- III. The qualifications for the office of a bishop. Vs. 2a-b

I. The commendation of the office of a bishop.

* “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work”. Vs. 1

A. The office is to be occupied by men who are diligent to seek the office.

1. The word desires “oregamai” means to be eager, earnest or to aspire, literally a stretching of ones hand out after in order

to grasp ones pursuit by one's internal motivation but the focus is on the external act. Vs. 1b

- a. It appears three times in the New Testament.
- b. It is translated "greediness" to identify those who covet money. 1Tim. 6:10
- c. It is used to describe the desire of the men and women of faith for a better country, a heavenly one. Heb. 11:16

2. The word also implies certain things.

- a. It does not mean that all men can be bishops.
- b. It does not mean that the office of bishop is to be exercised in turn by every man in the Church.
- c. It means that he who is drawn and called by God should respond to the Holy Spirit in a diligent manner.

B. The office is to be occupied by men whose hearts are towards it, not just attracted to it for some personal motive.

- 1. The second word desires "epithrmeo" means to set ones heart on something with passion and longing. Vs. 1c
 - a. The word can be used in a good sense or bad one, referring to inner feelings the context will determine the use.
 - b. It is used of a man who lusts after a woman. Math. 5:28

- c. It is used of Jesus' desire to eat the Passover with His disciples. Lk. 22:15

2. The word implies certain things.

- a. Men should not approach the office rashly or impulsively.
- b. Men should approach the office with the fear of God.
- c. Men should approach the office with a godly desire.

C. The office is to be commended as reliable.

- 1. The word faithful "pistis" means trustworthy and true, to be commonly excepted.
 - a. It is used for God who calls us. 1Thess. 5:24
 - b. It is used for the character of God towards the believer in his sufferings. 1Pet. 4:19
 - c. It appears thirteen times in First Timothy.
- 2. The phrase appears five times in the Pastoral Epistles and nowhere else. 1Tim. 1:15, 3:1, 4:9, 2Tim. 2:11, Tit. 3:8
 - a. The phrase is taken by some to refer to the preceding verse, that Eve as well as all other women will be saved despite of the fall.
 - b. The majority of commentators and expositors understand the phrase to

refer to what follows, the office and position of a Bishop.

- c. The phrase implies as well as teaches that the office of a bishop is a trustworthy, reliable and true office in the church for the benefit of the people of God.

Illustration

When Aaron and his sons were called into the office of the priesthood, the people were made aware of the awesomeness of the office.

Application

1. The office of bishop is not to be thought of as a common one that any man can occupy, but rather to be occupied by men who are called by God. 1Cor. 7:17
 - * “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches”.
2. The desire and longing for the office of a bishop is the work of God in the individual through the Holy Spirit to do His good pleasure. Phil. 2:13
 - * “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”.
3. The office of a bishop is commended due to the fact that it serves the benefit of the body of the church not the person even as the gifts necessary to occupy the office. 1Cor. 12:18, 24

- * “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased”...”That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another”.

The office of a bishop is to be commended!

II. The function of the office of a bishop. Vs. 1b-c

- A. The function of the bishop is the focus not the man. Vs. 1b-c
 1. There are no distinct instruction given as to how to exercise the office in our text but they are throughout the epistle.
 - a. The word for bishop “episkopos” means an overseer or a superintendent. Vs. 2
 - b. The LXX used it to describe the taskmasters in the restoration of the Temple 2Chron. 34:17
 - c. The original word referred to a foreman of a construction gang, a supervisor of a building construction.
 - d. The Greeks used it to describe the men appointed to go out from the Mother city to regulate the affairs of a newly founded colony in some distant place.

- e. Rome used it to describe the magistrates appointed to oversee the sale of food within the city of Rome.
 - f. The word was also used of a special delegates appointed by a King to see that the laws he had laid down were carried out.
2. The function of the office of a bishop regards Spiritual matters.
- a. The phrase “the position of a bishop” is “episkopee” which appears four time's in the New Testament and is always used in a Spiritual context.
 - 1) Twice it is used for the spiritual office, of Judas and our text. Acts 1:20, 1Tim.3:1
 - 2) Twice it is used for God's visitation on people through the gospel. Lk. 19:44, 1Pet. 2:12
 - b. The function regards practical labor by the phrase “a good work”, implying the co-participation of God and man.
 - 1) “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”. Eph. 2:10
 - 2) “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more

in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure”. Phil.2:12-13

- B.** The function of the office of a bishop is honorable due to the fact that it is spiritual in nature.
1. The honorableness of the office is indicated by the word good “kalos” which means intrinsically good, excellent, with the sense of healthy, serviceable, that which is ordered and sound.
 - a. It is used for the “the good fruit” in the Kingdom. Math. 13:10
 - b. It is used of Jesus “The Good Shepherd”. Jn. 10:11
 - 1) The office is good and beneficial because it is sourced in God through a call. 1Thess. 5:24
 - 2) The office is good and beneficial because God enables the one called. 2Cor. 3:5
 - 3) The office is good and beneficial because it is service to God. Acts 20:19
 - 4) The office is good and beneficial because it is service to the people. Acts 20:20-21

2. The spiritual nature of the office is indicated by the word work..
 - a. The word work “ergon” means employment, task or business.
 - b. The office is occupied with the well-being of means souls. 2Cor.c12:14-15
 - c. The office is occupied with hard labor. 1Thess.c5:12-13
 - d. The office is occupied with opposition. Heb.c13:17
 - e. The office is occupied with certain dangers. 2Cor.c11:22-28

Illustration

When Aaron went in to God, he was representing the people to God and when he came out he was representing God to the people, therefore he was held to a higher accountability.

Application

1. The function of a Bishop should not be confused with the practice of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church.
 - a. They place men who are called bishops over a number of churches to oversee and supervise them in accordance with their rules and regulations.
 - b. These men too often end up lording and ruling over as despots.
 - c. These positions can and often are given to those in favor and are bought with money.

2. The function of a bishop was exercised by an Elder.
 - a. The word elder “presbuteros” on the other hand refers to the elderly and senior men of the community.
 - 1) The concept of elders was not new; the Spartans had a presiding body called “gerousia”.
 - 2) The board of the elder men, the Parliament of Rome was called the “senate”, which comes from the word “senex” meaning an old man and England had men who looked after the affairs of the community called “alders”, the older men.
 - b. The terms bishop and elder are used interchangeably, co-related, and inter-dependent in the Bible.
 - 1) Moses at the council of Jethro selected men to oversee the work. Ex. 18:17-26
 - 2) God told Moses to gather 70 men of the elders of Israel to oversee with him & would anoint them with the Holy Spirit. Num. 11:16-17
 - 3) Paul appointed elders to the task of oversight for the church .
 - a) In the first missionary journey. Acts 14:23
 - b) In Paul's last meeting with the Ephesian Elders he refers to them as overseers. Acts 20:17, 28

c) In his letter to Titus Paul tells him to appoint elders in every city and identifies their function as overseers.

Tit.1:5,7

- c. The terms have a slight distinction.
- 1) The term bishop describes the function of overseeing.
 - 2) The term elder describes the man's age and position.

3. The function of "The Elder" and "The Bishop", was the local Pastor-teacher over a local congregation, such as Paul over the church of Ephesus, Epaphras over Colossee and Timothy over Ephesus.

- a. He would feed the flock, tend the flock and protect the flock from false doctrine and abuse. 1Pet, 5:1-4, Acts 20:27
- b. He would have other elders to assist him but he, like Moses was the one called and anointed to lead the flock. Acts 20:28
- c. He did not shepherd the flock through a multiplicity of Elders with equal authority in a majority rule, as some teach today.
 - 1) The Presbyterian Church is ruled by the "elder men" not the Senior-Pastor.
 - 2) The Episcopalian Church is ruled by the "overseers" of the Church.
 - 3) The Congregational Churches are ruled by the congregation through voting.

The function of a Bishop is to oversee the flock of God!

III. The qualifications for the office of a bishop. Vs. 2a-b

- A. The qualifications are for all men, there is no person who is except.
1. The qualifications are divided into four categories. Vs. 2-7
 - * Verse two to six is one continuous sentence.
 - a. Personal character in life. Vs.2-3
 - b. Personal family life. Vs. 4-5
 - c. Personal experience in life. Vs. 6
 - c. Personal reputation in life. Vs.. 7
 2. The total number of qualifications are fifteen.
 - a. The number varies if you count the explanation and reasons that accompany some of the qualifications.
 - b. The positive qualifications are found in verse two and the negative ones in verse three.
 - c. The qualifications are focusing on character, never ability or mere reputation.
 - * For our study we will look only at the first two requirements which are presented in the positive. Vs..2a-b

3. The most important thing to mention about these requirements is that they focus on the outward visible character and conduct, not the intent of the heart, for God alone knows the heart of each person.
- B.** The bishop must be blameless. Vs. 2a
1. The word blameless is made up of two words with the negative “a” preceding them.
 - a. The word “lambano”, means to take hold of.
 - b. The word “epi” means upon.
 - c. The prefix “a” means no or not.
 - d. Therefore the bishop or overseer is to be one who is above reproach in matters of life and conduct in such a way that any accusations made are false and slanderous, not being able to be proven.
 - e. The word appears three times in the New Testament. 1Tim. 3:2, 5:7, 6:14
 2. The requirement is not optional, but mandatory by the word “must”.
 - a. The word means to be under obligation or necessity as ones duty.
 - b. The word is used by Jesus, “But He needed to go through Samaria”. Jn.4:4

- c. The word is used by the apostles, “We ought to obey God rather than man”. Acts 5:29
3. The word doesn't teach or imply sinless perfection nor faultlessness.
 - a. He is a man as any other man with feet of clay but the nature of the offenses listed which deal with his moral and ethical character that would question his right to oversee and lead those in the house of God by not living up to the example of the believer and Christ.

* We are not talking about making a wrong decision over the place he chose to have a retreat or that you are offended because he didn't say hi to you!
 - b. He is held at a higher level of accountability and responsibility than the average believer even though he fails in the similar area because he is called and enabled to occupy the office by God's Holy Spirit.
 - c. He is not to be accused lightly or flippantly at every person' whim and personal dissatisfaction for it is a serious matter. 1Tim. 5:19, Tit. 3:1-2

* Korah and other along with 250 elders accused Moses and Aaron falsely declaring that they were taking

to much authority upon themselves and God swallowed them up in the earth. Num.16

4. The opening requirement seems and is taken by many to be the heading for what follows as the particulars that qualify what is meant by “blameless”.
 - a. To water these qualifications down or compromise them is to ignore the authority of Scripture and inerrancy through Inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. To allow men to oversee when they are unable to meet or fail in these areas is to destroy Biblical authority among the people of God by doing away with consequences.
 - c. To permit an overseer to continue in the place of his prior position despite of his failure without the proper discipline and time of proving genuine repentance, encourages the congregation to have a low view of sin and purity for life, giving themselves over to sin.

* Lenski the Greek scholar declares this, “The New Testament has only one standard for both clergy and laity not two. Yet we may note that in the case of the members of the congregation, faults may be borne with which can not be tolerated in

ministry, for they are to be an example of the flock" (*pp.579-580 Tim. comment.*)

- C. The bishop must be the husband of one wife.
 1. The phrase “husband of one wife” is made up of three words in the Greek.
 - a. The word “mias” means one.
 - b. The word “gunikos” means woman.
 - c. The word “aner” means man.
 - d. The phrase indicates a one woman man.
 - e. The phrase appears three times. 1Tim. 3:2, 12, 5:9
 2. The phrase does not teach the following by comparing the full counsel of God's word.
 - a. Paul is not teaching that an overseer has to be married to occupy the office of a bishop, for Paul indicates he was unmarried and Timothy is also portrayed as single. 1Cor. 7:7
 - b. Paul is not teaching that an overseer can not remarry, because Scripture is clear that remarriage is allowed in cases of adultery and death. Math. 5:32, 19:9, Rom. 7:2-3
 - 1) In fact Paul encourages the younger widows to remarry if under sixty years of age which would disqualify their husbands if

- they were overseers. 1Tim. 5:11-14
- 2) Only in the severe time of persecution did Paul give his counsel that it might be better to remain single. 1Cor.7:26-31
- c. Paul is not teaching that an overseer can not be married more than once, because if he had been married and divorced before his conversion to Christ, he is now a new creature. 2Cor. 5:17
- 1) Providing his wife has remarried or refuses to reconcile to him as a non-believer, after having attempted and exhausted every possible avenue to reconcile. 1Cor. 7:12-16.
- 2) If she is a believer then he must reconcile and get his home in order before he can oversee or serve in any capacity. 1Cor. 7:10-11
- d. Paul is not teaching that an overseer can not remarry after his wife dies, having to remain single, because that would mean that deacons come under the same requirement as the widows to receive help or even to be considered a widow. 1Tim. 3:12, 5:9
- 1) This was the prevailing interpretation of the church Fathers

- due to their ascetic lifestyle, considering remarriage a sign of self-indulgence after ones partner died.
- 2) In all three of these text the wording is the same, so however you interpret one you must apply the same meaning to the other two. 1Tim. 3:2, 12, 5:9
3. The phrase does teach the following by comparing the full counsel of God.
- a. Paul is teaching by implication that marriage was the norm for life the place for a man's credential to oversee and lead the house of God, not education or seminary.
- b. Paul is teaching that an overseer is to be a man who is dedicated to one woman, faithfully for life and no other woman is to ever have his affection or devotion, namely the wife he is married to "a one woman man", "one woman at a time".
- 1) The nouns in the phrase have no article emphasizing character or nature and communicating quality, not quantity
- 2) For whatever God has joined together let no man separate Jesus declared. Math.19:6

- c. Paul is teaching that an overseer is to be a man of sexual purity to his wife alone, which would prohibit kissing, petting or sexual inter-course with another woman.
- 1) Sexual unfaithfulness should not be thought of only when inter-course has taken place, but any sexual deviation from his wife.
 - 2) Sexual violation through Scripture is clearly not limited to inter-course. Ex. 20:14, Lev. 18:20, 20:10, Mal. 2:14, Math. 5:28, Rom. 1:27, Acts 15:29, 1Cor. 5:1,9, Gal. 5:19, 1Thess. 4:3-8
 - 3) “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Heb. 13:4
- d. Paul is teaching indirectly against polygamy and concubines, implied by the phrase, “the husband of one wife”.

Illustration

The example of the judgment passed on Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron should be a clear warning to all men who would think they can occupy the office of bishop without the fear of God. Lev. 10

Application

1. All the qualifications are masculine in verse one through seven, there is no place in the New Testament where women are declared elders or bishops.
2. There is no double standard with God, every requirement listed for a bishop is required of every believer except for two, the ability to teach and being a novice. 1Tim. 3:2g, 6a
3. The requirements provide Timothy with a standard for those who are to lead the Church of God and remind men of the need for careful examination before seeking service for God as well as the responsibility and accountability it carries. 1Tim. 3:15
4. These standards focus on character and conduct, delegating spiritual authority to every steward and servant of Christ.
5. This list is repeated with some variation. Titus 1:6-9, 2:5-9
6. The rational that no person can meet these requirements to perfection because everyone is a sinner and imperfect, is to ignore the enabling of God or to accuse God of calling without enabling.
7. The rational that all men can serve because all men sin in their hearts, thereby failing inwardly in the same manner as those who fail outwardly, is to accuse God of requiring a useless and pretentious list to be met for service, as well as not distinguishing the intent at heart with the deed..
8. The rational that declares that failure by an overseer in these areas is no cause to remove him

from service if he repents is to confuse and mistaken restored fellowship with God with restoration to service when one has disqualified himself from service.

* Forgiveness is never the question, but fitness for service as an overseer should always be questioned, to meet the Scriptural qualifications!
1Cor. 9:24-27, 2Tim. 2:21

A bishop must be blameless and the husband of one wife!

Conclusion

Paul gave to Timothy three important truths about the office of a bishop.

- I.** The commendation of the office of a bishop!
- II.** The function of the office of a bishop!
- III.** The qualifications for the office of a bishop!